

10,000 CASES OF LIQUOR WEEKLY FROM BAHAMAS

Continued from First Page.

Liquor from England, Ireland, Scotland, Canada and Jamaica, and while there were no papers signed, and no written agreement reached, they understood that they were going to sell liquor to all who cared to buy for cash. They would include in no bootlegging. They expected the United States and the United States. But they equally did not intend to put any prospective purchaser of their stocks to a cross-examination concerning his business plan. It was a cash business. Inquiry was up to the port officials.

Then, for the first time in the memory of the oldest inhabitant, a building not intended for government purposes was erected on the waterfront. It is a two-story structure, by all means the best looking and most modern business house in Nassau. It was erected by the Bahamas Islands Import and Export Company, which concern is said to have the backing of the old Maryland Distilling Company of Baltimore and the Gottschalk Company of the same city. Two American whiskey are specialized in this firm—Old Durham and Calvert. In bold letters the names of these famous distillations are spelled out across the front of the building, and in control of the Nassau end of the Bahamas Islands Import and Export Company is an efficient American, who is credited with being as near the political boss of the Bahamas as it is possible for a human being to be boss of a British colony where the only elective offices are those comprising the Local House of Assembly.

His name is Charlie Murphy. From Government House to the least of Grantstown's negro hovels Nassau hails the power of Charlie Murphy—the Tenthredine Tenthredine. And, like the native merchants who forsook dry goods and seal, fruits and sponges for liquor, Murphy is not to be associated with bootlegging. He sells American whiskey to him who cares to buy. You can buy one case or ten cases or a hundred cases or a thousand cases. You can lug them home and drink them or throw them into the ocean. That's no concern of Murphy's.

Liquor Cost \$15 a Case

Now it must not be forgotten that Nassau was all but bankrupt as late as January 1, 1920. The merchants who saw their salvation in liquor couldn't get sufficient capital on their rusty stocks to buy a second hand flivver. Liquor cost money—an average of \$15 a case imported from the United Kingdom. Edwin Charley and Charles R. Artaga, the distillers born in Jamaica, demanded cash and scorned credit. There were no distilleries in the Bahamas. There are none now.

There was just one hope and that lay in the attitude of the only bank in the colony—the local branch of the Royal Bank of Canada. They found that favorable. Of course the Bahamas Islands Import and Export Company and the Bahamas Products Corporation, Ltd., which has its New York offices at 132 Front street, Manhattan, were more or less independent of the Canadian bank. They were rich to begin with and what money they might need would come from New York. But the Royal Bank of Canada took the notes of merchant after merchant, none for amounts near the hundred thousand dollars mark. And the prosperity of the Bahamas was under way.

The only authoritative method of setting forth what happened then is to produce the official figures of the port of Nassau, into which all liquor imports were fetched. They are taken from Gov. Cordell's personal reports to the crown. The figures are here given in dollars and it must be remembered that they do not, on their face, tell the actual story, inasmuch as the rate of exchange has fluctuated.

	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919	1920	1921
Alc (gallons).....	10,853	10,853	10,853	10,853	10,853	10,853	10,853
Brandy (gallons).....	253	253	253	253	253	253	253
Gin (gallons).....	19,240	19,240	19,240	19,240	19,240	19,240	19,240
Rum (gallons).....	20,052	20,052	20,052	20,052	20,052	20,052	20,052
Whiskey (gallons).....	315	315	315	315	315	315	315
Whiskey (dozen quarts).....	2,215	2,215	2,215	2,215	2,215	2,215	2,215
Wine.....	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000
All other liquor and wines.....	210	210	210	210	210	210	210
	\$58,290	\$58,290	\$58,290	\$58,290	\$58,290	\$58,290	\$58,290

Nineteen hundred and twenty was the first year that Nassau's imports, including everything from bees to booze, amounted to \$1,000,000. And in 1920 booze alone aggregated \$1,114,119. Nassau is the only port of entry in the Bahamas. No record of liquor exports is kept.

Whiskey Is King in Nassau.

Before indulging in the only other statistical table of which this account of Nassau's regeneration will be guilty it must be understood that such was the rush of business at the first of this year that local merchants who had gone into the wholesale booze traffic to their last farthing failed to realize that the glut must expect indigestion and that continued banqueting is conducive to well developed cases of gout and gastritis.

The mounting imports continued to mount. They imported twice as much whiskey in January, 1921, as they did in June, 1920. They kept on ordering large consignments in February and March. They enlarged their figures in April and May. Whiskey had the call in the States. Whiskey became the Nassau. A negro, unable to read or write, would come into a Bay street wholesaler's hatless, shoeless and all but shirtless.

"Boss man, please, suh, gimme a hundred cases of Scotch." "Herd produce an inspiring roll of American money." "An' please boss man, suh, make the bill read a dollah mo' for each case than you charges me." "Our takeoff, hey?" "Suh, please."

Or a sweating American would come bustling in. "Can you let me have 2,000 cases of whiskey—rye and Scotch, fifty-fifty—at West End, Grand Bahama, day after tomorrow?" "No; but you can have it on the wharf, here, in Nassau. That's where our interest ends."

"All right; how much?" "A little figuring, and then the answer."

"Fifty thousand dollars." "Fair enough."

And the cash would be transferred next morning on the dock—cash. From all this the local Bahamian Government continued to reap wealth. A new tariff, designed to do no damage to the Bahamas, had been drawn up. The new import duties imposed a tax of 50c on every gallon of alcohol; 25c on ale; 25c on gin; 25c on every gallon of brandy; cordials, 50 per cent. ad valorem; gin, 10c per gallon; porter, 25c per gallon; rum, 50c per gallon; stout, 25c per gallon; whiskey, 12c per gallon, and 10c per dozen reputed quarts. Wines of all kinds pay 50 per cent. ad valorem.

Rum Enriches Government.

Thus the Bahamian Government was enriched to the extent of \$59,648 on liquor import duties alone in 1920. Ale yielded \$7,684; brandy, \$4,732; gin, \$86,236; rum, \$61,572; whiskey, \$485,406; wines, \$31,934, and cordials and the like, \$2,094.

And remember that this is computed at the low rate of exchange. The average rate for 1920 was \$3.75 to the English pound.

Regularly Loren A. Lathrop, the American Consul at Nassau, makes reports to the State Department. The State Department knows precisely what is going on. Probably Washington laughs as heartily as Nassau at the American newspaper references to the mystery ships. There is no mystery. The vast majority of the liquor carriers leaving Nassau either do not show liquor on their manifests, having cleared in hallow and shipping the stuff after having cleared, or clear with booze for another island in the archipelago—principally Gun Cay and Grand Bahama—a process entailing no technical difficulties or embarrassments.

There is therefore no export tax. At Grand Bahama, of which much will be said subsequently, there are nine huge warehouses. It is perfectly legal to ship liquor from island to island. The State Department knows that the motor boats, submarine chasers, fishing schooners and what not, all flying the British flag, carry the stuff to Grand Bahama and Gun Cay, forty-five miles from Florida. It is all quite within Bahamian and international law. And the law is not broken at Grand Bahama or Gun Cay. Anybody in the world, provided he has the cash, can purchase booze at either of these jumping off places. As has been said, the law is not broken at Grand Bahama or Gun Cay. Anybody in the world, provided he has the cash, can purchase booze at either of these jumping off places. As has been said, the law is not broken at Grand Bahama or Gun Cay. Anybody in the world, provided he has the cash, can purchase booze at either of these jumping off places.

Of course it is desirable that the schooner or other vessel leaving the Bahamas for a run up the American coast should carry the stuff to Grand Bahama and Gun Cay, forty-five miles from Florida. It is all quite within Bahamian and international law. And the law is not broken at Grand Bahama or Gun Cay. Anybody in the world, provided he has the cash, can purchase booze at either of these jumping off places. As has been said, the law is not broken at Grand Bahama or Gun Cay. Anybody in the world, provided he has the cash, can purchase booze at either of these jumping off places.

"We can receive permission to change a Shipping Board boat's registry quite easily. It can't be done in twelve hours any more, but it can be done in the time it takes a letter to travel from Florida to Washington and from Washington back to Florida. You can do almost anything if you know how."

Incidentally, this lawyer used to be in the employ of the Government of the United States. Now he is prospering as the legal representative and adviser for the bootleggers.

Tough Days for Bootleggers.

About the first of June, 1921, the prosperity of Nassau came upon a reef. The business of supplying America with liquor began to slow up. There was just as much demand in the States. There was plenty of liquor on hand. There were plenty of boats. There was no dearth of human beings willing to man the ships at fancy prices and the bootleggers for every case landed on the shores of Grand Bahama, Gun Cay or even Florida itself. There were still plenty of hardy sailor men eager to sneak the booze laden schooners up the American coast to Georgia, Delaware, New Jersey, Long Island and New England.

But as Blatini suffered from too much advertising, so were the other Bahamian units withering under publicity. The prohibitionists in the States and the multiplying drys in England were aroused. Pressure was exerted here and there along the American coast and even in the Bahamas. Policemen, sheriffs and prohibition officers who had maintained a clean record of no arrests began to be nasty and the well known bootleggers were told to "cut it out for a while" and take a trip until the tempest should subside.

Down here in Nassau, two or three of the merchants went to the Royal Bank of Canada for extensions on their notes. Very firmly and with characteristic courtesy G. H. Gambin, manager of the Nassau branch, informed them that it

	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919	1920	1921
Quantity.....	4,752	4,752	4,752	4,752	4,752	4,752	4,752
Value.....	\$6,414	\$6,414	\$6,414	\$6,414	\$6,414	\$6,414	\$6,414
Quantity.....	15,370	15,370	15,370	15,370	15,370	15,370	15,370
Value.....	\$22,982	\$22,982	\$22,982	\$22,982	\$22,982	\$22,982	\$22,982
Quantity.....	4,184	4,184	4,184	4,184	4,184	4,184	4,184
Value.....	\$4,548	\$4,548	\$4,548	\$4,548	\$4,548	\$4,548	\$4,548
Quantity.....	20,807	20,807	20,807	20,807	20,807	20,807	20,807
Value.....	\$6,400	\$6,400	\$6,400	\$6,400	\$6,400	\$6,400	\$6,400
Quantity.....	15,310	15,310	15,310	15,310	15,310	15,310	15,310
Value.....	\$16,285	\$16,285	\$16,285	\$16,285	\$16,285	\$16,285	\$16,285
Quantity.....	10,829	10,829	10,829	10,829	10,829	10,829	10,829
Value.....	\$7,515	\$7,515	\$7,515	\$7,515	\$7,515	\$7,515	\$7,515
Quantity.....	8,538	8,538	8,538	8,538	8,538	8,538	8,538
Value.....	\$1,114,119	\$1,114,119	\$1,114,119	\$1,114,119	\$1,114,119	\$1,114,119	\$1,114,119

would be inconvenient to make such extensions. The bank was all right and the merchant was quite all right. But something had happened. One of the most trustworthy of the Crown's representatives talked over the situation with THE NEW YORK HERALD's reporter.

"I am not in position to make definite statements," he said. "But do you know I shouldn't be at all surprised if it turned out that not so long ago Washington wrote a very courteously worded note to Downing Street and that Downing Street replied to the effect that Washington was quite right about it. And then, it seems to me, Sir Herbert Holt, president of the Royal Bank of Canada, sitting in his offices in Montreal, may have received a letter from Downing Street."

"It is not at all improbable, you know, that Sir Herbert wrote to his Nassau branch, and there you have it. At all events, money is damned tight in Bay street, Nassau. We have merchants liquor rich. They have enormous stocks of liquors that they cannot liquidate. What?"

That he was quite correct was proved at once. On August 8, the still dazzled merchants of Nassau, still making great profits despite the fact that there was every surface indication that the fall season was about to set in, and that depression was settling over the Bahama liquor traffic, received the shock of their recent lives by receiving abrupt letters from G. H. Gambin, local manager for the Royal Bank of Canada.

The following letter, received by one firm, is typical:

"Under date of July 29, I have received from the general manager a letter instructing me to request all my customers to make substantial payments on account of advances for liquor during the present month. Will you therefore be good enough to look forward to paying such a reduction on or before the 31st instant?"

Inasmuch as 95 per cent. of the present business of Nassau comprises the importation of liquor from the United Kingdom and its colonies and, furthermore, that about 80 per cent. of this industry is being carried on on borrowed money, it is not difficult to picture the effect these letters had upon the merchants who had invested the last farthing they could command and commandeer in booze. There were the makings of a first class panic. Between eight and ten million dollars worth of booze on hand soaking up carrying charges! And a sudden closure of virtue stimulating American law enforcement agencies to unexpected industry!

There was nothing to do but to sell for cash—sell and undersell. Beloved profits would have to go. The bank was demanding cash. The next step would be an agreement by Downing Street to put a stop to the entire business. That might be done by banning further exports of hard liquor into Nassau. And then someone discovered, or discovered he had discovered, that Washington had written to London along these very lines. Concentrated worry filled the Nassauian breast.

Be that as it may, the fact remains that to-day in the thirty-one great warehouses owned by the British Crown, in the two big storage spaces owned by the Bahamian Government, in all the emergency storage places drafted into service by the local merchants there are vast stores of booze that eventually will be consumed by Americans, but which at this writing are nothing but drains upon the pocketbooks of their owners. There are charges to be paid and interest to be met, and many of these merchants have invested their utmost farthing in those stocks.

Of course, this state of affairs is but temporary. Within reasonable time the mystery ships will be no more. The frightened constables will abate. The traffic will resume its wonted briskness. But a deal of worrying is to be noticed in Nassau just now.

The attitude of the Bahamian Government toward all this bootlegging and bootlegger supplying is one of good natured tolerance. Indeed, it may be said that it is one of glad acquiescence. From Gov. Cordeaux down to the least of the negro constabulary it is recognized that thanks should be offered for prosperity. Salaries of local office holders have been increased. As outlined above, the colony has dissolved its debt and begun to make itself presentable. You may go to any of the crown's representatives or to any member of the only elective body in the local government, the House of Assembly, which corresponds to our American House of Representatives, and ask them what they think of the situation.

Their reply never varies: "We are breaking no law. We are a law-abiding people. We sell legitimate merchandise to any buyer with the necessary money. If we break the laws we will be punished. You are at liberty to investigate us from top to bottom. We rather like the idea of your doing it."

"But, see here," you tell them, "this business of supplying booze to bootleggers is adding nothing to Nassau's reputation. First you made money as pirates—back in the days of Blackbeard, Capt. Bob Kidd, Dennis Mackarty, old Hornsby and the rest of them. Then you suffered poverty until wrecking flourished out on the Bahama banks. Later on you took to blockade running—during the American civil war, you know—and when that war was over and your occupation killed, you had to wait until filibustering to Cuba became the rage until you regained your financial feet again. That came to an end, and now you're bootlegging."

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Rum, Lime Juice and Grenadine.

"My dear fellow," is the reply, "you've come down to the tropics from the north in the middle of a hot summer. Probably the sun is too much for you. Have you tried my new combination of rum, lime juice, ice and grenadine? Let's give it the up and down, as they say in your beloved States."

Because of the present and probably only temporary slackness of the market, and because the local merchants need ready cash to meet interest and other carrying charges, prices have slumped. Scotch whiskey—the popular brands—has sold on the wharf in Nassau for \$40 a case. You can get it for \$23 now. There are three kinds of gin obtainable in great quantities—London Gordon dry gin, New York Gordon dry gin and London-New York Gordon dry gin. The latter variety of this popular drink was

selling for 5 shillings 6 pence a bottle here last week.

Halg & Halg, Johnnie Walker, the British Buchanan whiskeys, White Horse and other well known brands are being shipped to Grand Bahama and Gun Cay for sale—about \$15 a case at the average. The profits of the venturesome booze runner, therefore, have leaped skyward, for there is no report here that the American drinking masses are paying any of the benefits of cut rates in Nassau.

To be sure, the whiskey that leaves here for America (or the vast majority of it, at any rate) is diluted. Generally speaking, they throw the contents of twenty barrels of whiskey into a vat. To that is added ten barrels of rain water and three barrels of kick that the writer failed to have analyzed, but which is known as German spirits. Earnest endeavor to obtain the chemical formulae for these German spirits met with rebuff. "Secret stuff," said the authority.

A mere trifle like that, however, is of no consequence to Americans, for they have paid as much as \$150 a case for it in the States. It is common enough to get \$100 a case for it. This diluted whiskey is, of course, bottled right here in Nassau. Some idea of the magnitude of the industry is to be grasped through the statement of a Nassauian printer who took the writer through his establishment.

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